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Remarks

Executive Secretary
29 Nov 84
Date

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Office of the Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

19 November 1984

**FOR: Dr. James Timbie
Advisor for Strategic Affairs
Office of the Deputy Secretary
Department of State**

**SUBJECT: Unclassified Paper on Nicaraguan
Military Buildup**

**Attached you will find an unclassified
paper on the Sandinista military buildup that
the DCI promised to Deputy Secretary Dam at last
Friday's luncheon.**

Hope this helps.

Cheers!



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**Special Assistant for
Interdepartmental Affairs**

**Attachment:
As Stated**

19 November 1984

NICARAGUA MILITARY BUILDUP

Talking Points

The Sandinista military buildup has greatly accelerated over the past year, causing increased concern not only in Washington, but also in the Central American region itself.

- Even without the delivery of MIG-21's, the recent direct shipment of the sophisticated MI-24 helicopter gunship by a Soviet ship was unprecedented and undoubtedly represents a Soviet decision to play a more direct role in strengthening the Sandinista regime.
- This year Soviet Bloc deliveries to Nicaragua of military goods is up some 25% compared to last year, and could reach some 15,000 tons by year's end, because at least five more Soviet ships are currently en route to Nicaragua.
- Until the recent MI-24 delivery, the Soviets generally preferred to leave the shipment of major weaponry, such as tanks and artillery to surrogates, such as Cuba and Bulgaria. Soviet cargoes generally included such military-related items as MI-8 transport helicopters, military trucks, field kitchens, and mobile workshops.
- Thus the recent Soviet delivery, which also included minesweepers and goods still not identified, signifies a new departure by Moscow, and we are now forced to monitor all potential Soviet arms carriers closely.

The Sandinistas like to justify their continued military buildup as purely defensive. They cite the threat of US intervention and the US-supported counterinsurgency to justify the acquisition of new Soviet weaponry. They say their military buildup represents a threat to nobody. The facts speak otherwise. Let's review them.

- The Sandinista buildup began well before there was any anti-Sandinista insurgency, and well before relations with the US deteriorated to the point of military tension.

Henry Jones
1

- In fact, the military buildup began the moment they took power. The first Cuban military advisers arrived in Managua on July 19, 1979--the very day the Sandinistas celebrated their revolutionary victory.
- Although the US wanted good relations with the Sandinistas, and even offered military aid in addition to extensive economic support, we were largely ignored. Instead, the Sandinistas preferred to align themselves with Cuba, and in late 1979, a secret military pact was signed.
- Cuban arms aid also began to arrive in late 1979, and in early 1980, the first arms agreement was signed with the Soviet Union.
- Nicaraguan military personnel left for Cuba and the Soviet Bloc to begin intensive training on tanks, artillery, and jet combat aircraft.

All this time, the Sandinistas were pretending that they wanted good relations with the US and peace in the region.

- Meanwhile, they were secretly supporting a massive arms flow to El Salvador in support of insurgents there. These arms fueled the so-called insurgent "final offensive" in early 1981.
- Once this offensive failed, and a captured pilot admitted he secretly had flown arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador, the Sandinistas changed their tune. They admitted they had provided arms, but denied they continued to do so.
- Again the facts speak otherwise. While the Sandinistas were protesting their innocence, in early 1981, they allowed the Salvadoran insurgents to set up secret communications facilities in Nicaragua as well as establish their overall military headquarters there.
- These communication facilities continue to operate to this day, assisting in the flow of covert arms and ammunition from Cuba and Nicaragua to insurgents in El Salvador.

Meanwhile, the Sandinista military buildup continued, providing a shield behind which to spread revolution throughout the region.

- In early 1981, the first Soviet tanks and heavy artillery began to arrive. Moscow did not send them directly, however. Instead the arms were shipped via Algeria in an attempt to hide Soviet involvement. Later Bulgaria would assume the role of a Soviet arms intermediary.

- The anti-Sandinista insurgency did not become a problem to Managua until March 1982. At that time, they proclaimed a state of emergency, which has been extended ever since.
- Thus the Sandinista military buildup was hardly the result either of a US threat or an active insurgency.

And what is the situation now?

- Nicaragua has received nearly half a billion dollars in arms over the last five years.
- It now has the largest active duty military force in Central America--some 60,000 men.
- With reserve and militia units, the total rises to about 120,000, and the Sandinistas now say they want to arm as many as a million.
- Furthermore, the buildup has become a definite offensive threat to its neighbors.
- The Sandinistas now have a force of over 100 Soviet T-55 medium tanks. No other Central American country has any.
- And the Sandinistas have an artillery force of nearly 200 guns, including Soviet 122 mm rocket launchers, with massed firepower unmatched in the region.

With the largest ground forces in the region, the Sandinistas need only a comparable Air Force to complete their buildup. Thus they have long desired to obtain modern jet fighters, and have made no secret of their determination to get them.

- They have sent pilots to the Soviet Bloc for training, and they are building the largest combat fighter base in the region at Punta Huete outside Managua.

We are certain that only US demarches have so far prevented the delivery of MIG-21 jet aircraft.

Even though the recent Soviet ship deliveries did not include MIG-21s, they did deliver sophisticated MI-24 helicopter gunships. This devastating weapon is used by the Soviets to hunt down Freedom Fighters in Afghanistan, and it undoubtedly is intended for a similar use in Nicaragua.

- I would like to point out that Congress has so far balked at the mere suggestion that we provide even less-advanced helicopter gunships to El Salvador. ✓

While this Soviet arms delivery was underway, along with a similar one by the usual Bulgarian route, the Sandinistas were claiming that they were willing to sign a Contadora Peace Treaty.

- But the draft they are willing to sign would almost immediately end the US support to friends in return only for general assurances that the Sandinistas would later agree to limit their military buildup.
- Furthermore, the draft is weak on verification measures to ensure that Nicaragua has stopped exporting revolution and sent home all their Cuban military advisers.
- The Intelligence Community estimates there are some 3,000 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua, but the Sandinistas have admitted to only some 200.

Thus verification is a problem from the very start.

- And let me assure you that we have completely reliable information that the Cubans are there, even in combat zones close to the Honduran border.
- The Sandinistas have denied this, but we can no longer trust their denials. Just as we know that they continue to support insurgents, not only in El Salvador, but also in Honduras and Guatemala, as well.

What of the internal situation in Nicaragua?

- The Sandinistas have conducted an election in which the largest democratic opposition group refused to participate because of Sandinista restrictions.
- An election in which the major opposition candidate was stoned by a Sandinista mob before the international news media.
- An election in which the two largest independent parties also tried to pull out, but were prevented from doing so by mobs and legal maneuvers.
- An election which a key Sandinista leader labeled as a farce in a secret speech to Nicaragua's Communist Party.
- Copies of this speech, which were smuggled out of Nicaragua, should be must reading for every American, for it shows clearly what the Sandinistas intend to do.
- Their goal is to build a Marxist-Leninist state in Nicaragua--another Cuba in this hemisphere.

The Catholic Church in Nicaragua, despite repression and intimidation, despite mob violence and insults to the Pope himself, despite censorship and forced exile of priests, has remained a steadfast opponent of the Sandinista regime.

- The Catholic Church has opposed the military conscription law in Nicaragua, which forces young men to serve in the Sandinista Party's own Army. Not in a national Army, but in a partisan military force with political commissars, just like in the Soviet and Cuban armies.
- The Catholic Church has also called for a national dialogue and real democracy in Nicaragua. Not just a dialogue only with the parties of the Sandinista's own choosing, but a dialogue that includes the armed opposition as well.
- But the Sandinstas continue to label the anti-Sandinista insurgents as US puppets, despite the fact that US aid has been cut off for over six months.
- Yet the anti-Sandinista insurgents continue to grow in strength despite the US aid cutoff, their ranks swelled by disaffected peasants, repressed Indians, and even the urban youth which has long been the target of Sandinista recruitment efforts.
- Thus the anti-Sandinista now have a force of nearly 15,000 men--the largest insurgency in Central America.
- It is larger even than the one in El Salvador, which has been building for more than a decade.

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Executive Registry

84 - 9998

29 November 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for Latin America
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Nicaragua Military Buildup

Bob:

That is a very good memo you did on the Nicaraguan military buildup. I'd like to see a supplement on the capability and significance of heavy guns other than the helicopter gun ships which the Sandinistas have received, how they might be used, and what the contras can do to defend themselves in terms of policy and tactic, as well as defensive weapons. How can that artillery force mentioned on page 3 be applied and avoided? I'd also like specifics on the helicopter gun ships which the Congress denied El Salvador.

If you can get this to me sometime before I go to see McFarlane this afternoon it would be useful.

William J. Casey

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A/NIC/LA
29 November 1984

SUPPLEMENT TO NICARAGUA MILITARY BUILDUP, 19 November 1984

The Sandinista artillery inventory--not including antiaircraft artillery--features such relatively heavy weapons as the BM-21 122-mm. truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers, 152-mm. howitzers and 85-mm. field/antitank guns. Attached are data sheets on these weapons systems; ranges are given in meters.

- The howitzers and field/antitank guns would be useful to Nicaragua for either intimidating its neighbors or defending the country from an invasion by conventional armed forces. They are not particularly useful against the Contras. Lighter pieces of artillery and even tanks have proved more useful to the Sandinistas in insurgent areas.
- The multiple rocket launchers can serve either of those two purposes, but also represent a threat to massed concentrations of personnel. They would be very effective in attacks on Contra base camps. Moreover, compared to other conventional artillery, they have a significant psychological impact on ground troops--as the Contras have told us.
- The Contras could attack these rocket launchers with machine guns and grenade launchers currently in their inventory. The idea would be to disable the vehicle and the crew.
- However, the Contras would need to increase the level and distance of patrolling to locate the rocket launchers and decrease the potential scope of their own operations, since the rockets have a range of from .5 km to 20.5 km. That is, they would have to fight in small groups, limit the period of their occupation of objectives such as towns, and stay well clear of roads or other flat terrain on which the rocket launchers can travel.

With regard to gunships for El Salvador, our information is that two types have been under discussion:

- One is a Hughes 500 light observation helicopter refitted with two 7.62 mm. electrically-powered miniguns.

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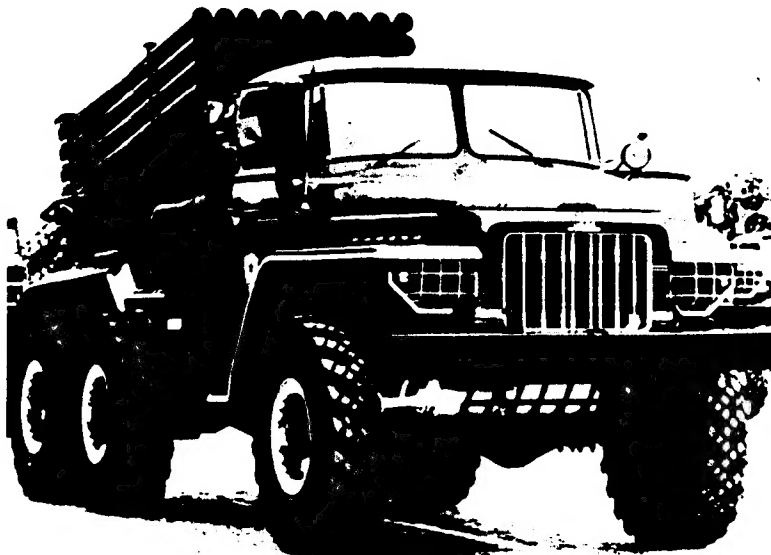
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- The other is a version of the World War II vintage fixed-wing C-47 transport to be fitted with three 50-caliber machine guns. (These are similar to the "Puff, the Magic Dragons" used in Vietnam, although in this instance not armed with the more capable, rapid fire 7.62 gatling guns.)
- Neither is in the same league with the MI-24 Hind, which is an armored gunship making it impervious to most infantry weapons. It is armed with rocket pods and a heavy (12.7 mm.) gatling gun. It is also capable of carrying bombs and 4-6 antitank guided missiles.

Attachments:
As stated

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SECRET*UNCLASSIFIED***(C) 122-mm ROCKET LAUNCHER (40-round) BM-21**

This Soviet multiple rocket launcher was first observed in the 7 November 1964 Moscow parade. At least two improved models have been observed since May 1965, and various other models have been derived from the basic 122-mm system. The launcher tubes are arranged in four banks of 10 tubes each and are fired from off carriage.

A spiraled groove runs the full length of each 9.8-foot tube. The rocket has a lug attached which rides in the groove. This arrangement causes a spin of the rocket at launch, stabilizes its flight, and improves its accuracy. This new spin-stabilized rocket fired from the longer-than-average tubes provides the Soviet Army with a weapon which is more accurate than other comparable Soviet launchers.

The launcher is mounted on the Ural 375 6x6 truck, a 4.5 ton-class vehicle. This vehicle can easily carry the launcher, pull an ammo trailer, and provide a stable firing platform. Bulgaria, Cuba, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, North Korea, Egypt, Iran, India, Libya, Peru, Angola, and Morocco have BM-21's. North Korea has a domestic version of the system consisting of 30 tubes mounted on a ZIL-151/157 truck. Egypt has received some of these. Romania has a 21-tube model mounted on an SR-113 Bucegi truck. China also has truck-mounted versions, one on a 6x6 CA-30 chassis, another on a 6x6 CQ-260 "Red Crag" chassis.

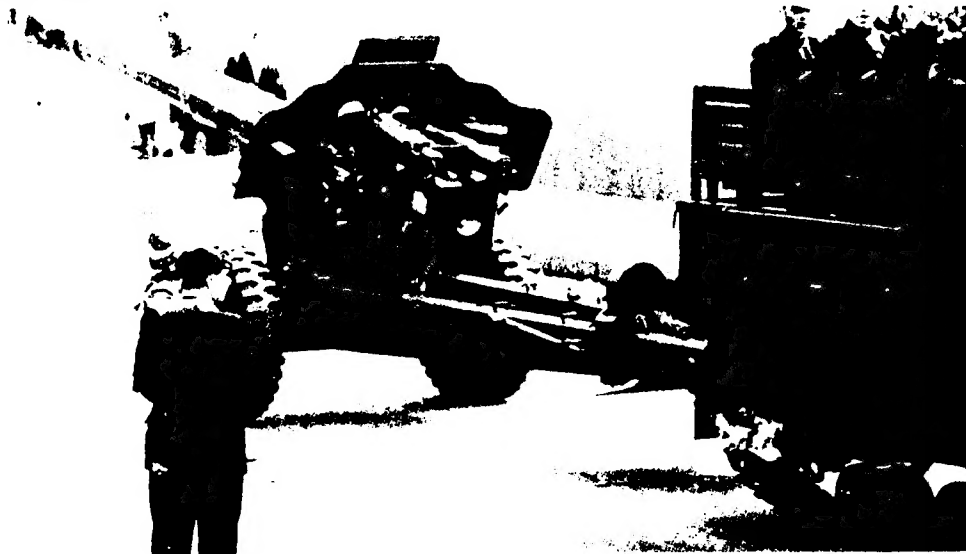
CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Vehicle: | |
| Weight (w/ldr & rfts) | 13.3 mt |
| Maximum speed | 76 km/hr |
| Cruising range | 481 km |
| Launcher: | |
| Weight | 2.72 mt |
| Elevation | +0° to +75° |
| Firing quadrant limits | +0° to +75° within traverse and cab limitations |
| Traverse | Aprx 120° left and 60° right of center |
| Reload time | 10 min |
| Rocket: | |
| Caliber | 122-mm |
| Length | 3.43 m |
| Weight | 66 kg |
| Range (maximum) | 20,500 m |
| (minimum) | 500 m |
| Warhead | |
| Type | HE Frag |
| Weight | 19.25 kg |
| Fuze | Point detonating with superquick, long and short delays |
| CEP (maximum range) | 218 m at 2°3 range; 202 m at maximum range |
| Air transportable | Yes |

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(C) 152-mm HOWITZER D-20

The D-20 was first observed in the 1955 Moscow Parade. It is deployed in 18 or 24 gun battalions at Army and *front* levels, primarily as a general support type system. Recent organizational changes at Army level have increased the 6 gun batteries to 8 gun batteries — thus, 24 guns (three 8 gun batteries) per battalion.

The D-20 has essentially the same carriage, recoil system, shields, and cradles as the 122-mm gun D-74. The principal visual differences are the larger, more prominent, double-baffle muzzle brake and the shorter but larger outer diameter tube of the D-20 as compared to that of the D-74. Recent information is that the Soviet classify this weapon as a howitzer (rather than as a gun-howitzer as widely believed for many years).

Poland, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Egypt, Iraq, North Korea, and Vietnam have D-20s. A Chinese produced D-20 is designated Type 66. North Korea, also, probably produces the D-20

CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE

| | |
|---|--|
| Maximum range | 17,230 m |
| Weight (travel position) | 5.9 mt |
| Length/width/height (travel position) | 8.14/2.03/2.47 m |
| Traverse/elevation limits | 60°/-2° to +45° |
| Crew with driver | 10 |
| Emplacement/displacement time | 8 to 10 min |
| Ammunition; | |
| Types available | Frag-HE, HE, CP, HEAT, Flechette Shrapnel, Smk, Ill, Chem, WP |
| Projectile weight (Frag/HE/CP/HEAT) | 43.6/40.0/27.4 kg |
| Rate of fire (1/15/30 min) | 4/40/65 rds |
| Precision - P_{95}/P_{50} @ 12,100 m ¹ | 46/8.5 m (est) |
| Direct fire engagement range | 900 to 1,000 m |
| Armor penetration ² | |
| (HEAT) @ any range | 450-mm (est) |
| Principal prime mover (track/wheel) | AT-S/ZIL 135, TATRA-813 |

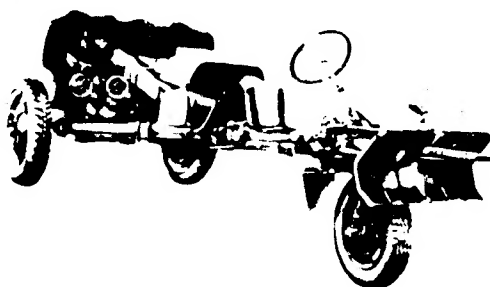
¹ 70% maximum range - Frag-HE projectile.

² 0° obliquity.

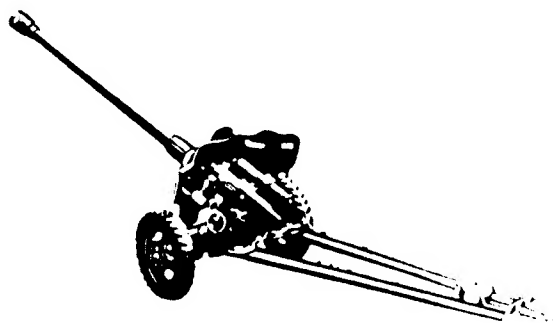
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(C) 85-mm FIELD/ANTITANK GUN SD-44 & D-44

This gun is a lightweight, low-silhouette, dual-purpose weapon designed for field and antitank use. It is an adaptation of the 85-mm gun used on the T-34/85 tank and has typical tank-type recoil and recuperator cylinders mounted between the shield, thus giving the gun tube a clean appearance forward of the scalloped shield. Other recognition features are the double-baffle muzzle brake, tubular trails, and the small caster wheel located above the spades in the traveling position.

The Auxiliary-Propelled Antitank Gun SD-44 is a motorized version of the D-44 and features a motorcycle engine mounted on the left trail. Capable of transporting its crew of six under its own power, this gun can operate for relatively short distances on surfaced roads or over moderately rough terrain. For longer distances, it can be towed by a prime mover. The auxiliary power arrangement facilitates the rapid emplacement and displacement of the weapon on the battlefield.

The D-44's role in the Soviet Army has been taken over to a large extent by other weapons; however, significant numbers are still found in some Soviet as well as Bulgarian, GDR, Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian units. In addition, the weapon has been supplied to Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, Algeria, Albania, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Mali, Yemen (Sana), Yemen (Aden), Sudan, Iraq, Guinea, Somalia, Pakistan, China, and Tanzania.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE¹

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Maximum range (HE) | 15,650 m |
| Weight (travel position) | 2.3 mt |
| Length/width/height (travel position) | 8.3/1.7/1.4 m |
| Traverse/elevation limits | 54°/-7° to +36° |
| Crew with driver | 5 |
| Emplacement-displacement time | 1 min |
| Projectile weight (Frag-HE/APC-T/HVAP-T/HEAT-T-FS/SMK) | 9.5/9.2/3.4/7.3/10.1 kg |
| Rate of fire (1/15/30 min) | 10/60/90 rds |
| Precision P_{er}/P_{ed} @ 11,000 ² | 40/4.5 m |
| Direct-fire engagement range | 1,200-1,500 m |
| Armor penetration ³ | |
| APC-T @ 1,500 m | 122 mm |
| HVAP-T @ 1,500 m | 178-mm |
| HEAT @ any range | 300-mm |
| Principal prime mover (track/wheel) | AT-P/light truck-GAZ-69 |

¹ C&P data for SD-44.

² 70% maximum range Frag-HE projectile.

³ 0° obliquity.

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